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PREPARATION OF A SUCCESSOR AGREEMENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL TROPICAL TIMBER AGREEMENT, 1983

Statement on the Sustainable Management of Forests in the European Union by the European Union

1. The European Union is strongly committed to the sustainable management of its forest heritage. Forest management in our countries relies on long and varied traditions. Forest cover and production are constantly increasing. The conservation of forests is a basis element of all national forest policies and legislation, by means of which a high level of sustainability in forest management has already been achieved.

2. In the light of the Rio Conference, the Member States are currently updating their forestry strategies and policies and preparing national action plans on the implementation of the Rio Statement of Forest Principles. Furthermore they are preparing specific national or regional guidelines to be incorporated into their forestry plans and programmes, for the implementation of the general guidelines for the sustainable management of forests in Europe, as adopted by the European Community and its Member States at the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (Helsinki, June 1993).

3. Consequently, the European Union is fully committed to sustainable forest management in compliance with standards equivalent to those adopted by the ITTO for Tropical Forests, notably in the framework of the Year 200 Objective. Furthermore, sustainable management is applied to all forests in the Member States, not only to those producing timber for international trade.

4. As illustrated by the Helsinki resolutions, the current efforts of European countries, and the European Union, are aiming to achieve, without delay, the highest standards of sustainability in forest management, notably by promoting international cooperation and developing criteria and indicators for the evaluation of sustainable management of forests in the European context and conditions.

5. The Member States intend to maintain strong forest administrations, effective integrative land use and forest planning, multipurpose forestry, extension systems for private forest owners, highly developed silvicultural treatment of forests stands and ecologically sound harvesting practices which together have contributed to the current trend of increase in forest area, standing volume and forest increment throughout Europe, as recently recorded by the FAO Forest Resource Assessment.

6. The European Union confirms its commitment to the conservation, sustainable management and development of all types of forest. It hopes that negotiations on a global convention on forests can be initiated as soon as possible which would result in the establishment of globally agreed mechanisms to monitor performance in these matters in all forests. This should allow for the integration of the aims of the ITTO Year 2000 Objective into a legally binding instrument covering all types of forests.

7. The European Union reaffirms its commitment to an open trade in forest products as set out in Paragraphs 13 and 14 of the UNCED Forest Principles. It fully recognise the importance of avoiding trade discrimination or double standards in the international timber market.